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BY THE
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Argument.

INTRODUCTION. Professor Huxley's and Mr. Leslie Stephen's views of Evolution and Morality considered. Christianity contrasted with other religions. What was our Lord's environment? Christ's actual environment, Pharisaism. Our Lord greater than the Prophets. Christ's teaching, a Contrast. Limitations of the previous conceptions of Altruism. Christianity, final, a regeneration. Christ, the motive power of Christianity. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Faith, the basis of Christian belief. Conclusion.

CHRIST,
NO PRODUCT OF EVOLUTION.

Introduction.

SINCE Darwin published his work, *The Origin of Species*, in 1859, and brought to the front the old doctrine of the evolution of living things, but on a new basis, this principle has been taken up and applied elsewhere than in the physical world. Thus the Duke of Argyle has shown how 'The Reign of Law' is, if not quite universal, at least very widespread. It was soon thought by some that the time had come to apply it to religions; and Christianity was, so to say, tacitly assumed, among other forms of religion, to have been evolved by some natural process out of Judaism or elsewhere; without any great, if any, break in the continuity of moral thought or interference whatever. The necessity, however, of strictly proving this conception to be true does not seem to have occurred to the advocates of the evolution of morality.

It is the object of the present writer to show that, when evidence for a natural evolution of the Christ, *i.e.*, as He is portrayed to us in the Gospels, is looked for, none is forthcoming. But, it will be desirable, first, to illustrate the false position of the evolutionist by quoting from typical writers; and then to show what were the environmental conditions of Jesus Christ in the beginning of the first century in Palestine. By so doing, it will be perceived that the conditions necessary for an evolutionary development of true religion, as represented by the Person of Jesus Christ, are not only almost totally absent, but that in many ways they were distinctly adverse to it in character; so that, instead of Christianity being a gradual development out of Judaism, it is a *regeneration*, often, indeed, involving a *reversal* of what had been previously thought to be right conduct.

Consequently, it will be seen that the assumption of Christianity having been naturally evolved, in the ordinary sense of the term, was a purely *à priori* deduction, unverified and unverifiable.

Three of our leading writers who have discussed the question of the evolution of morality, are Mr. Herbert Spencer, the late Right Hon. Prof. Huxley, and Mr. Leslie Stephen. I have, therefore, taken these authors as representing the opinion that morality, Christian or other, has been

evolved by a purely natural law governing the development of the human mind. Mr. Spencer endeavours to show, as will be seen, that moral acts only differ from non-moral ones by insensible grades. Mr. Stephen holds the view that Christianity was a natural product of Jewish thought: but Prof. Huxley in his latest utterance has departed from the notion of evolution being efficient *per se* to evoke morality, in the discovery that it is really in opposition to cosmic evolution.

In the first section I have considered more especially the views of Prof. Huxley and Mr. Stephen, and shown that Prof. Huxley's newest utterances, being on the one hand opposed to those of the other two writers, are, on the other, more akin to the Christian view.

After briefly comparing the origin of Christianity with that of other religions, the nature of our Lord's environment is considered; that is, as represented by the Judaism of the time, this being practically Pharisaism, and by the literature of the period.

Jesus Christ, being *Himself* Christianity, was a unique Being in the history of the world: for though he drew largely from the more spiritual utterances in the Old Testament, yet He was infinitely 'greater than the prophets.'

As love is the central feature of Christianity, it is shown to be a new creation in the world by

the defective nature of all views of altruism when compared with that of Jesus. The highest type of love was exemplified in Him.

Lastly, Christianity is final. It is no development, but a regeneration. Its efficacy resides in its full, adequate and perfect motive power, namely, Jesus Christ Himself. No other system of morality—as Aristotle laments—has had any inherent power to regenerate the masses of mankind. For 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself:' and the source in man of his regeneration was the new element of faith.

Jesus Christ was a new creation, and no product of evolution.

Prof. Huxley's and Mr. Leslie Stephen's Views of Evolution and Morality Considered.

In the year 1893, the late Right Hon. Prof. Huxley delivered the Romanes lecture. It called forth at the time two important articles in the August number of two reviews of that year.[1] The special feature which evoked those replies was that Prof. Huxley proved to himself that

[1] 'Evolution in Prof. Huxley,' by Prof. St. G. Mivart, *The Nineteenth Century*, August, 1893, p. 128. 'Ethics and the Struggle for Existence,' by Leslie Stephen, *The Contemporary Review*, August, 1893, p. 157.

cosmic evolution could not account for morality. Prof. Mivart says that Prof. Huxley, twenty years before, identified 'duty' with 'pleasure'; but that he at last had come to see that real merit depends exclusively upon *motive*. Again, Prof. Huxley said:—'Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another which may be called the ethical process. . . . It depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.'

Prof. Huxley here maintains that ethics are not the outcome of any branch of the evolutionary processes by which he believed that the universe has been and is still being moulded; but that it is by an antagonistic and governing effort on the part of man, that the principles of morality have been established.

If this be true of the various moral systems to which he alludes, *à fortiori* is it true of Christian ethics. I heartily agree with the Right Hon. Professor's present conclusion; though he himself afterwards looked at Christianity (to which he strangely makes no allusion in his lecture) as but a slight differentiation from Judaism. To this I do not assent. In 1889 he asked the questions:—'If the primitive Nazarenes of whom the Acts speak were orthodox Jews, what sort of probability can there be that Jesus was anything else? How

can He have founded the universal religion which was not heard of till twenty years after his death?'[1]

The negative answer to the first question is found in the study of Jesus Christ Himself. A like reply in the negative to the second is the obvious retort that Jesus Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, in other words, the universal religion of purity and humanity, to his contemporaries somewhere about the year A.D. 30.

That the cosmic process of evolution cannot develop morality, Prof. Huxley declares in the following words:—

'The thief and the murderer follow nature just as much as the philanthropist [we might say more, for nature apart from man knows little or nothing of charity]. Cosmic evolution may teach us how the good and evil tendencies of man may have come about; but in itself it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil, than we had before.'

Prof. Huxley thus became nearer to the position of the Christian than he formerly was.

Mr. L. Stephen, however, still lingers afar off. He does not seem to have advanced further than the position he maintained seven years previously. Thus in his article on 'Belief and Conduct' he

[1] *The Nineteenth Century*, April, 1889, p. 501.

says: 'Generally speaking, the dependence of morality upon some sudden revelation on a supernatural communication to the world, would require that a corresponding catastrophe should have taken place in the process of development, and that the new motives introduced should prove their novelty by the obvious introduction of a new factor in history.' Again, 'We are all agreed that the change from older to newer creeds does not imply a simple antagonism, but—up to a certain point, that is, an uncertain point—a continuous development.' Speaking also of the evolution of beliefs, he says:—'It supplies a new test which any theory, however attained, must be able to satisfy.'[1]

Whether evolution be true or not cosmically, I am firmly of the opinion that it is unphilosophical to assume on *à priori* grounds that every phenomenon *must* be interpreted by evolution, without there being any necessity for investigating the circumstances of the case, connected with its rise and development. Nor am I at all disposed to agree with Mr. Stephen that, as far as Christianity is concerned, it does not exhibit, even in several particulars a 'simple antagonism' to certain preconceived ideas. In fact, as I shall endeavour to prove, it is far more of the nature of a *complete reversal* of contemporary morality than of an 'improvement,' 'development,' or 'differentiation'

[1] *The Nineteenth Century*, September, 1888, p. 372.

from it. Lastly, instead of assuming evolution to be a 'test' of the truth of Christianity, it will, I think, be ultimately seen that in this one instance, Christianity will put evolution on its trial, with even stronger evidence than Prof. Huxley's, for the case of Morality *v.* Cosmic Evolution.

Prejudice in favour either of an evolutionary or miraculous origin is a disturbing element, which is utterly foreign to all scientific investigations. It is simply a question of data, and whether the evidence forthcoming tells more in favour of one view or the other. Of this the reader must form his own judgment.

Let us now turn to Mr. Stephen's second article of 1893, and examine it from a Christian point of view.

If it be thought, as he says, 'to pit the microcosm against the macrocosm,' the Christian remembers that it is a matter of indifference, for 'if God be for us, who [or what] can be against us?' Since God, as the Christian believes, ordained both the cosmos and man, he has faith to believe that 'He will not suffer man to be tempted above that he is able to bear.' But just as Prof. Huxley makes no mention of Christianity in his historical allusions to morality; so Mr. Stephen takes no account of Christian motives and the Christian's source of strength. Both Prof. Huxley and Mr. Stephen confine themselves to terres-

trial considerations. A Christian does not lose sight of at least a firm belief in a future life.[1]

Mr. Stephen says:—'Any attempt to explain or justify the existence of evil is undeniably futile.' But, on the supposition that man should be a responsible being (a fact he admits on p. 170), you cannot have 'good' without its opposite, which we choose to call 'evil'; for without its possibility, man must remain as non-moral as a wild animal.

Moreover, as long as we use the abstract term 'evil,' it seems to imply a vast deal, because men's evil deeds are so numerous; but, putting aside 'physical evils,' which are purely relative and not really 'evils' at all, the moral evils of man are all reducible to selfishness and the abuse of natural laws.

As soon, therefore, as he has discovered that he is a being responsible to a good God, his sense of duty implies obligation to Him; and having learnt 'to do unto others as he would have them do unto him,' his natural tendencies must now be reversed. Selfishness must yield to *its opposite*, altruism. The use of natural law must now be the rule instead of its abuse in his own person; so that love and purity represent his character instead of

[1] Whether the evidence be *demonstrative* or not, he believes it to be *most probably* true, and it inspires him with one of the strongest incentives to purity and righteousness.

their opposites, hate and concupiscence—or lawlessness.

We now come to the main point of Mr. Stephen's paper. He asks whether 'the cosmic processes tend to promote or discourage virtuous conduct; does the theory of the 'struggle for existence' throw any new light upon the general problem?' 'One source of evil is the conflicts of interests.' This seems equivalent to calling natural selection an evil. Yet according to Darwin natural selection brings about the survival of the fittest, and is therefore a 'good.' So that while it may be an evil to those who perish, it is a good to those who survive. 'What is one man's poison is another man's meat.' So, too, again, he says:—'The incessant struggle between different races suggests a painful view of the universe,'—so it always will to those who look to this world only for the consummation of their hopes,—thus war, to which he here alludes, may appear 'evidently immoral' to a highly educated civilian like Mr. Stephen; but it has quite a different aspect to existing savages and civilized nations of antiquity; nor is it, indeed, the opinion of our own military at the present moment. The question as to war being regarded evil by those who do the fighting is a purely relative one, and not at all one of morality or immorality, with very large classes of human beings; with savages

it is considered morally right, a duty and a pleasure. With our military it is a 'glorious opportunity.'

That war *is* an evil to the communities engaged in it may be proved to be the case for all that; at least for those who are beaten!

Now, the first approach to anything like altruism as issuing from the struggle for existence appears, according to Mr. Stephen, to reside in the following observation. He corrects what he regards the popular view of natural selection (which, however, is, I think, open to refutation), viz.: that 'the world is a mere cockpit.' He observes that the struggle is not all slaughter, but 'necessarily implies reciprocal dependencies in a countless variety of ways.'[1] . . . 'The struggle . . necessarily involves co-operation,' because 'the survival of any species involves the disappearance of rivals no more than [as much as?] the preservation of allies.' He gives no concrete illustrations, so that it is difficult to think out how this can be. Let us, then, imagine a case, and take, *e.g.*, a wolf, a sheep, and grass, and add a jackal as a rival to the wolf. This, we will suppose, first kills the jackal, then the sheep, which it finally eats. Natural selection has thus eliminated two out of the four beings, the wolf and the grass

[1] This sentence reminds one of a similar remark made by Mr. Herbert Spencer when he wished to show that morality was 'developed' from non-morality (see p. 42).

proving themselves to be the fittest to survive. Now, if the wolf had to depend upon the sheep for his existence, where is there any 'reciprocity' between them, or where does 'co-operation' between the grass and the wolf come in; or, indeed, between which or all of the four? May it not be suspected that Mr. Stephen was arguing fictitiously in order to bolster up a baseless theory of an evolution of morality?

Again, he says that a hen 'behaves in a way which is at once injurious to her own chances of survival of the species.' Does not this really seem but little short of nonsense? Parturition is a perfectly natural process, and in wild animals involves no difficulty or danger whatever. Moreover, how far is 'natural altruism' to be trusted when rats have been known to kill and devour a comrade which was caught by the leg in a trap; or a hen canary which plucked out every feather from its offspring, still too young to feed itself, in order to fresh line its nest for a new brood?

The first form of morality, according to Mr. Stephen, would be established on purely prudential motives. Thus 'peace becomes preferable to war.' . . . 'Is this, then, a reversal of the old state of things,—a combating of a cosmic process? I should rather say it is a development of the tacit alliances, and a modification so far of the direct or internecine conflict.'

Mr. Stephen, like Mr. H. Spencer, uses the word 'development;' but if we may accept as a principle, that *neither one of any two things, which are diametrically opposed to each other, is capable of being evolved or developed from the other,* then peace is no development from war; but the result of the *cessation* of all those things which go to make war. It is no 'modification' but a *substitution* (as Prof. Huxley rightly says). It is, in fact, the very *opposite condition*, and a direct reversal of the conditions involved in conflict.

Still, Mr. Stephen seems obliged to maintain that 'morality proper, however, has so far not emerged. It begins when sympathy begins.'

Precisely so: but *what is the origin of sympathy?* Has natural selection anything whatever to do with it?

'Undoubtedly,' proceeds Mr. Stephen, 'this involves a new principle.' So, too, our Lord said:—'A *new* commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, *as I* have loved you.' To illustrate it, Mr. Stephen again appeals to the readiness of a mother who *consciously* sacrifices herself for her offspring. 'This is merely the most striking exemplification of the general process of the development of morality.' He points to the presence of 'consciousness' in the act as the

turning point.[1] 'The conduct which we call virtuous is the same conduct externally which we before regarded as useful. The difference is that the simple fact of its utility—that is, of its utility to others and to the race in general—has now become the sufficient motive for the action as well as the implicit cause of the action.' 'A sufficient motive for virtuous action.'

At this point the Christian unhesitatingly joins issue with him. It may be true for the high-souled few among mankind, but all historical evidence goes to prove the exact opposite to be the case, as far as the great majority of mankind are concerned. Self-interest and *not* altruism has ruled supreme.

Philosophers of old were more far-seeing than Mr. Stephen, for they not only argued as he did, but confessed their inability to find an adequate motive to make them virtuous; as the reader will see when he comes to the lament of Aristotle.[2]

Prof. Huxley says in his lecture, 'Virtue is

[1] I think it is quite open to question whether the care shown by a female animal for its offspring is not simply a natural instinct, and not necessarily or at all correlated with, or accompanied by, any consciousness of altruism whatever, as is the case with a human mother. Altruism in the form of love or charity becomes a *moral quality* in human beings as well as an instinctive one,—an impossibility with animals, which cannot rise beyond non-morality.

[2] Quoted on p. 49.

directed not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting as many as possible to survive.' This might be called putting Christianity in the form of an aphorism. It is precisely what Christ bids all His followers to do:—To be 'the salt of the earth,' as 'leaven' in the world, to let men 'see their good works, and glorify their Father in heaven.'

The world is not to be destroyed, as natural selection would do, but to be saved; for God willeth not the death of a sinner.

Mr. Stephen, however, says of Prof. Huxley's statement, 'I have a difficulty as to its application.' If he would but study the life of Christ and the history of Christianity (not ecclesiastical distortions) that difficulty would soon vanish.

Theorize, however, as we may upon the origin of morality, no one denies that thinking men in all ages have *found out* that it is better to be virtuous than wicked. What are the ten books of Aristotle's *Ethics* all about, but an elaborate display of this fact? It is not that morality has gradually emerged from non-moral conduct (much less from immoral); but that when the moralist had gone so far as to frame laws, 'Thou shalt not—' what they all felt was, they could not enforce their views and laws (apart from punishments) without a higher motive than utility. It is only the wisest, and those naturally disposed to virtue, who will

follow virtuous practices. The masses of mankind have ever remained untouched; simply because a virtuous line of conduct is diametrically opposed to the strongest and most vicious instincts.

There were many seekers after God in the old world, many thoughtful philosophers; but they all died, making no impression on their contemporaries, and left no moral seed behind them.

On the other hand, the 'new commandment' is the source of all true altruism among Christians of to-day. Christ has given a *motive power*—Himself—one unknown to all the world before, and such as no other system of morality could ever have had. The Greek neither would nor could be virtuous for the love of his gods; we can be, or at least try to be pure, not simply from prudential motives, but for the love of our Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Christianity contrasted with other Religions.

Having thus considered Prof. Huxley's and Mr. Leslie Stephen's views on the origin of morality, let us now turn to the Christian aspect of the questions raised by these eminent writers, and see if Christ, so far from being a development out of the centuries immediately preceding the period of His birth, does not exhibit a decided 'break in the continuity' of contemporary religious thought.

Let us, for argument's sake, place Christianity on a par with other things, of the existence of which evolution is said to afford the most satisfactory explanation. We may say, then, that it is a 'genus' of religions, just as there are genera of animals, plants and languages. Moreover, as from the data, the origin of any animal, plant or language is to many minds unthinkable on any other hypothesis than that by an evolution of some sort; so, undoubtedly, it might on an *à priori* assumption, but, perhaps, too confidently be taken for granted by such thinkers, that Christianity could only have come into existence by some similar or analogous process. We must carefully consider all the characteristics of the moral environment of the period, out of which Christianity is assumed to have been a natural product, and contrast them with Christian ethics—in other words, with *Christ Himself*—and then draw the most reasonable conclusion possible.

A pronounced difference is at once observable between the origins of the most important religions of the world, and those of plants, animals, or languages. We cannot name any one plant or animal, or group of root-words, and say that these were undoubtedly the first ancestors of existing ones, respectively. When we trace special religions to their origins, however, we find that they took their rise from certain individual men—Confucius,

Zoroaster, Buddha, Mahomet, Christ. They arose, therefore, so to say, *suddenly*. In each case the founder doubtless collected what he regarded as the best ideas of the past, and eliminated what he thought were degradations. That is, as far as he went he was a reformer. Such environment as he was born in had its influence upon him, and he probably represented the aggregate product, or the master-mind of a floating tendency to advance at the time at which he flourished.

Thus, Mr. Stephen speaks of Brahminism, that it 'arose from within, and is not supposed to have been supernaturally revealed. We have no doubt that its peculiarities were due to the character of the people among whom it arose, and therefore cannot be logically assigned as the cause of their characteristics. To get out of a vicious circle, we can only speak of the influence of a religion in such a way as to draw inferences as to its utility or otherwise, when we have to come to an understanding as to how far it was an original cause, and how far it was a product of pre-existent conditions.'

Mr. Stephen then asks:—'What made Christianity? What were the conditions of the origin and development of the Christian Church? Was it something suddenly intruded into the world?' I will endeavour to answer these questions.

The sentiment of humanity to a variable extent

lies at the root of, or at least, is embodied to some extent in all the chief religions of the world which show any advance upon the purely self-interested notions of savage worship. Hence, there are often to be found similar moral maxims scattered over the world. Heathen 'seekers after God' have again and again spontaneously uttered noble sentiments, which have their counterparts in Christian teaching.[1]

But with regard to Christianity, when evolutionists assert or imply that it *must* have been evolved as a product from pre-existent and contemporary thought, it should be remembered that in the first place we can place our finger on the spot in the map of the world where it arose, and on the Man who was its Founder. Secondly, that we know exactly what were the moral ideas of His contemporaries and immediate predecessors.

The all-important question is therefore, whether Christ Himself, *i.e.*, His *personal character*, as exhibited in His words and actions, represents some slight improvement upon the best of His immediate predecessors; as, according to the principles of evolution He ought; for Christ *is* Christianity. By this I mean that when we say some men are Christians, or that their religion is

[1] The reader will find this subject admirably worked out by Bishop Westcott in his work *The Gospel of Life*, chaps. iv. and v. (1892).

Christianity, we mean that they are individually more or less Christ-like; and what Jesus Christ came to do was to make *all* men, if possible, regard Himself as the standard of perfection of character at which they were continually to aim; and so, as far as it is possible to attain to what St. Paul calls 'the full measure of the stature of Christ.' The nearer, therefore, any man has approached Him so much the more is he a Christian. The kingdom of heaven which Christ preached was simply *character*: 'Lo! the kingdom of heaven is within you;' and the process of becoming a Christian is described in various terms and metaphors, such as 'the putting on the Lord Jesus,' 'the dwelling or abiding in Him, and He in us,' etc. Christianity, therefore, may be defined, according to the New Testament, as *The conformation of the human character to the absolutely perfect standard, as exhibited in the person of Jesus Christ.*

Opponents, however, would seem to treat of Christianity too abstractedly, or to limit its meaning to ecclesiastical dogmas, etc.; but, if even the latter were all true, they are not found to be formulated as articles of belief in the Gospels at all; but are deductions of later centuries. The origin of Christianity has nothing to do with them, for the question at issue is whether evolution can account for, or be accepted as, the *rationale* of Christ's personal character, His actions, and His words.

Now, it may be assumed that the methods of evolution, if they were not identically the same in the moral sphere, would at least run parallel to the course they pursue in the intellectual and physical worlds. Was then Jesus Christ, and has He done, more or no more than Buddha, Confucius, or Zoroaster? Was He simply a Reformer like them, and did He represent the 'best thought,' and perhaps a little more than that of the times in which He lived? Was He simply the product of those times? If so, His morality ought to show some little improvement on that, say, of St. John the Baptist, who immediately preceded Him.

Mr. Stephen admits—what is somewhat contradictory to the words I have quoted above—that 'a great revolution' took place when Christianity was introduced, and which he adds 'compels theologians to postulate the intervention of an entirely new spiritual force.' 'Apologists,' he says, 'labour to point out how precisely Christianity was adapted to the various wants of the time. The obvious inference is that Christianity was developed by the instincts of the people who felt those wants.'

History, however, does not seem to warrant this conclusion of the apologists, from the data it supplies. If the 'instincts of the people,' *i.e.*, the Jews, 'felt the want of Christianity,' they surely would not have crucified Jesus. We know as a fact that at the very close of His ministry He had

scarcely a handful of followers, so that He mournfully said to His chosen few, 'Will ye also go away?' and when He was finally arrested, even they too 'all forsook Him and fled.' After His death, they appear to have given up all hope of the 'redemption of Israel.' So far, therefore, the history of the time gives us no warrant whatever to assume that Christ was a product of the instincts of Palestine.

It would be a pertinent question to ask whether Christ could have been a product of Christian England of this nineteenth century, supposing we had received our existing Christianity from some other source. Now, the holiest of men that have ever lived have invariably, 'instinctively' recognized Christ as a Being of such a transcendent moral altitude, that they have not felt worthy to tie His shoe-latchet. No morality of later times has ever been 'developed' from, or surpassed that of Christ. Hence, if the Christian environment of to-day could not evolve a Christ, *à fortiori* none could have done so in the year A.D. 30.

We only require to study the four Gospels in order to discover the character and ethics of Jesus Christ. The rest of the New Testament simply echoes what we find in them; and, however much they may differ in details and style, no one can dispute the fact that the general portraiture of

Jesus Christ is in all essential features one and the same in each and all of them.

What was our Lord's Environment?

To find out whether Christ was a development from, or a product of, the moral environment of Palestine of the first century, we must consider what that was. Fortunately, the problem is extremely simple. We may put aside all Greek philosophy as powerless to furnish any intellectual or spiritual environmental elements in the case; for there is no trace of their influence whatever in the character and teachings of Christ. The philosophers had no motive powers but reason and habit; and they confessed that they could offer no theory of morals which could touch the masses. On the other hand, Jesus went at once to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, blessed those who were poor in spirit, and offered Himself as their Redeemer.

Now, the religion of Palestine in the beginning of the first century was practically Pharisaism. It is true the Pharisees were a sect, as St. Paul says he was of the straitest sect of the Pharisees; but their ideas and practices had permeated the community, and were generally adopted, for we read 'the Pharisees and *all the Jews*, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the traditions of

the elders; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, of brazen vessels, and of tables.'[1]

The Sadducees were comparatively few in number, and of no importance from our point of view. They represented a reaction against the extremes of Pharisaism.

We know from the New Testament that they refused to believe in a future life, one of the tenets of Christ, and could have afforded no elements towards forming His character and teaching. Indeed, they became actively hostile at the close of His ministry.

The Essenes formed the third party. They too, were few in number; were a contemplative and more or less, moral sect; but were monks and ascetics, and most exclusive in their ideas and practices: and if there is any one command plainer than, or as plain as another in the teaching of Christ, it is that good men are not to take themselves *out* of the world, but should be as leaven *in* it, and yet be not *of* it. They are to let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven. Nor does asceticism ever receive the slightest countenance from Jesus, whom His traducers could even call a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber.

[1] Mark vii. 3, 4.

It has been thought by some that Christ's teaching might find some of its elements in the Talmud, but the Talmud, with its hair-splitting casuistry, is vastly inferior to the Psalms and prophetic writings. It is mostly on a par with Pharisaism, and this He utterly rejected.

The pseudepigraphic writings are especially interesting, as showing how wild were the prevailing ideas during the last century B.C.; particularly as to the character of the Messiah and His kingdom. Thus in *the Psalms of Solomon* the general impression which they give the reader is the favouritism which the writer seems to expect in God towards Israel, and the utter destruction in store for the outside wicked world. These 'psalms' have nothing in common with the New Testament. The ethical nomenclature introduced by Christianity is conspicuous by its absence. There is no mention of *metanoia*, no 'forgiveness,' no 'reconciliation,' no 'regeneration,' no *suneidesis* or conscience, no *agape*. The distinctive characteristics of Christ and His teaching are totally wanting. The Messiah was to be a glorious temporal ruler; but the author has not a shadow of conception that His kingdom would be a spiritual one over the hearts of men. So far, therefore, as these curious writings reflect the religious ideas of the centuries in which Christ was born, there is a total severance between them

and Jesus Christ. He would seem to have been very familiar with them, indeed, as *e.g.*, with *the Book of Enoch;* but He derived absolutely nothing of His spiritual life and teaching from them, such being evolved alone from His own inner consciousness.

Edersheim thus sums them up[1]: 'Their general character (with one exception) may be regarded as anti-heathen, perhaps missionary, but chiefly as Apocalyptic. They are attempts at taking up the key-note struck in the prophecies of Daniel; rather, we should say, to lift the veil only partially raised by Him, and to point—alike as concerned Israel, and the kingdoms of the world—to the past, the present, and the future, in the light of the kingship of the Messiah. Here, if anywhere, we might expect to find traces of New Testament teaching; and yet, side by side with frequent similarity of form, the greatest difference—we had almost said contrast—in spirit prevails.' This great author clearly, therefore, recognizes no trace of evolution from this contemporary and widespread literature to the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

Christ's actual environment, Pharisaism.

There yet remains a source from which we might think it possible to educe Christ's moral character,

[1] *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i., p. 37.

namely, the teaching of the law, of the Psalmists, and of the Prophets of the Old Testament. These breathe a far holier spirit than the degraded 'legalism' of the Pharisee. Unfortunately, they had become practically as powerless for good, as the extraordinary vapourings of the writers of the pseudepigraphic books were impotent. If it had been distinctly stated that only the sect of the Pharisees washed cups, etc., and that they did so with the idea of such a practice being merely an outward and symbolical act, and that *all* the people, Pharisees and Sadducees alike, accepted the moral teaching of Isaiah, Ezekiel, David, and Moses, acted upon it, and lived up to it; *then* the sharp contrast which exists between Christ and His contemporaries would have been to some extent toned down. But what was in reality the case? Four hundred years had elapsed since the last prophet had died; and instead of Jewish morality being slowly developed and improved during that time, *degeneration had set in*, so that by the first century the prophetical teaching—the highest the Jew had ever known—had become practically dead as far as any possible renovation of the nation was concerned. This is evidenced by the abortive attempt of John the Baptist, and by the nature of his preaching. In a word *the 'hypocritical' scribe had replaced the prophet.*

Now, we read that the people at once detected

a marked difference between the character or 'tone' of Christ's teaching and that of the scribes, who were His contemporary moralists; for He spoke not as the scribes, the exponents of the traditional law, but as of '*One having authority*.'

It is true that Christ went to the moral law and the Prophets, and He often quotes from the Psalms and other books, whereby to furnish His teaching with much of its morality; but it is important to observe that to acquire the thorough knowledge of the Scriptures which He displayed, to utter the apt quotations which ever arose to His lips on the spur of the moment, to exhibit the ready application of the spirit of the old covenant to the circumstances about Him, all showed a mastery of religious principles which could have only been acquired by intense self-study of the written books, and certainly not from any 'religious atmosphere' in which He might have been educated, for He was manifestly far beyond the level of thought, not only of the Jews in general, but even of members of His own family, amongst whom He was reared.

Our Lord greater than the Prophets.

As an illustration of the 'advance' He made upon contemporary belief—while He rejected the legalism of the priest and Pharisee, and went back

to the more intuitive and simple form of primitive religion—He added an entirely new conception to Jehovah; for He bade men now call Him 'Father.' They had dimly foreshadowed the idea of Father, it is true, and the name Father-Zeus was doubtless known to the Jews; but what a travesty of a father was Jupiter! Christ's Abba was a new discovery to the world.

When we recall how the Jews would have stoned Jesus because He called God His Father, it strikes one as most significant, that He used the same expression when twelve years of age. The term 'Father' as applied to Jehovah by the Prophets had the meaning of 'Creator' with the Jews; but it is very clear that they understood Jesus to signify some much closer relationship between Himself and God, which no other Jew had. Whatever He thus signified, such a relationship could have been of no evolutionary kind. And while He identifies Himself with the Deity, He bids all men now to recognize God as 'Father' too.

Renan notices the novelty of this conception, he says:—'It is probable that, from the first, He looked on Himself as standing with God in the relation of a son to his father. This was *His grand act of originality; there was nothing here in common with His race.* Neither the Jew nor

the Mussulman has understood this delightful theology of love.'[1]

If this be true, evolution certainly cannot account for the conception. Renan unwittingly bears witness to the absence of 'development' in the words I have italicised.

The only known sources then in existence, which could have furnished any part of Christ's character and teaching, were the moral law, the Psalms, and the prophecies. Even these, I repeat, did not form part of His 'environment,' but what He derived from them must have been almost entirely acquired by His own personal study of the written books. Like Buddha, therefore, He was in this a Reformer.

But He was much more than a Reformer. In the first place, he began by *subverting* the national ideas of the expected Messiah. His own followers were looking to Him as a temporal ruler, even, it is said, after His crucifixion.[2] It is not to be denied that there were, perhaps, many unknown spiritually-minded Jews at Jerusalem like Simeon and Anna, but they all regarded Him as a military 'Redeemer of Israel.'[3]

The popular idea of the Messiah's method was *force;* that of Jesus Christ was its opposite, *submission.* In accordance with this principle, He

[1] *Life of Jesus*, p. 27.
[2] Acts i. 6. [3] *Cf. e.g.*, Acts ii. 38 with Luke i. 68–75.

persistently elevated the position, and exhibited the superior value and importance of the milder virtues in contra-distinction with the heroic. The latter had been hitherto regarded as the most noble, and most worthy to be cultivated, so that the greatest men had almost always been the mightiest in valour. *Virtus*, not virtue, was regarded as pre-eminent. Jesus reverses this, and places humility, gentleness, peaceableness, moral courage, and the like in the first rank; while physical heroism—useful enough in its own sphere —is rarely wanted in the kingdom of heaven. This trait of His teaching, which appears in many other instances, to some of which I shall allude, is expressed by His oft-repeated saying, 'The first shall be last, and the last first.' That is, it was not a *development*, but an actual *reversal* of what had been the universal judgment of mankind. The word 'virtue, is derived from *virtus*, 'valour,' it is true; but its meaning is no development from, but diametrically opposite to it. 'Might' was regarded as 'right,' and force ruled the world. This is the fundamental principle of cosmical evolution to which all true moral systems are opposed. Jesus, however, said:—'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' and 'The meek shall inherit the earth.' So, unlike all the rulers of the world, who conquered it by force, He alone has subdued it by submission. The holy army of martyrs illustrate

the principle he practised Himself and laid down for His successors to follow.

In accordance, then, with the universal idea of ruling by force, was the widely-accepted conception of the Messiah. This had been received from the mistaken teaching of the Prophets, and by the later authors of the pseudepigraphic writings of the last centuries B.C., who *located* the Messiah at Jerusalem, to whom all the known nations of the earth, if they were not exterminated, should bow.

No one before Jesus appears to have entertained the very vaguest idea that the Messiah should rule over the *hearts* of men, and that they should constitute *His* kingdom, or the kingdom of heaven.

There was, therefore, no 'development' in this conception of the Messiah. It could not have been 'a product' of the times; for it stands in direct opposition to the environmental views of the period. Moreover, it was consistently carried out throughout His whole life on earth. From the day of His temptation in the wilderness, when He deliberately refused to entertain the idea of using force for His own benefit or self-glory, to His death upon the Cross, a most complete humility and submission to opposing forces was the universal character of His conduct. All four authors of the independent Gospels picture Him thus. His humility was profound.

In accordance with this fundamental conception

of the Messiah as ruling the heart only, He emphatically protests against, and denounces all forms of external ritual as being regarded as moral in themselves. It had been the universal error of the world to look at external acts as compensating for wrong-doing. Ritualism, or what is called 'justification by the law' is once and for all time repudiated; while the motive arising from within is henceforth to be looked for as the sole gauge of true religious worth. There is no development of the one conception from the other. It is a complete inversion.

External ceremony has to be replaced by *internal integrity*.

This principle is one which is to be found in the Prophets, *e.g.*, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;' but it was practically dead when Christ came, and in its place was the 'tithing of cummin and anise,' and 'the washing of cups and vessels.' It had never, however, been enforced with such an overwhelming influence as Christ brought to bear upon it.

St. Paul's description of himself, the strict Pharisee, when he discovered how the Gospel had freed him from the tyranny of pharisaical legalism, is a masterly refutation of the idea that there can be any morality or religion in outward service whatever; nor any use at all, except so far as it partakes of the nature of a symbolical, or outward

and visible sign of what is inward and spiritual in the heart.

Here, again then, as far as this element of Christ's morality can be traced to his environment, that environment went all the other way. Legalism in his day ruled the moral sphere of Judaism, and was the essence of pharisaical and rabbinic teaching. Christ swept it all away:—'Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!' 'unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven.' On the other hand, the placing religion in pure motives, arising from *within*, is diametrically opposed to any righteousness from the exercise of ritualism, *without*. It is impossible for the one to be developed from the other.

Christ's Teaching, a Contrast.

But Christ actually contrasts His own teaching with pre-existent ideas. The reader will remember how He repeated the words, 'Ye have heard it said by them of old,' etc. He takes the prevailing views of various phases of human conduct as bearing upon others, and contrasts what had been thought to be right with what He now declares to be so.

Thus, no one before Jesus had ever said that yielding to bad temper was wrong. We now learn

that it is a sin to be angry.[1] The sole exception is indignation at the sight of *wrong-doing in others*. For this is a feeling akin to conscience, which is awakened by *wrong-doing in ourselves*.

Limitations of the Previous Conceptions of Altruism.

It was said, 'Love your neighbour, but hate your enemy.' This maxim is not to be found in the Old Testament in these words; but it was abundantly carried out by the Jews, and it represented the universal feeling of the world at large.[2] The Jew would not only have no dealings with the Samaritans, but counted all outside their nation dogs. Similarly every nation was in natural enmity with every other. In a word, the most rigid exclusiveness was the characteristic feature of nationalities.

On the contrary Christ proclaims the universality of the brotherhood of man, on the grounds of all men having one and the same Father-God. But you cannot develop 'inclusiveness' from

[1] Matt. v. 22. In the Revised Version the words 'without a cause' are suppressed.

[2] For example: in the first book of the Republic of Plato, a definition of justice is given by one of the speakers, as doing as much good as possible to one's friends, and as much harm as possible to one's enemies.

'exclusiveness.' The latter *shuts out*, while the former *invites in*. They are in direct opposition to one another. The principle underlying this world-wide inclusiveness or humanity is called *agape*. Words often teach much, and this word does so especially. It is not to be found in any profane Greek authors whatever, apart from Christian writings. It occurs in the Septuagint; but only as sexual love in the Song of Solomon. It is used in the pseudepigraphic writings for the love of God for Israel; but not of the love of Israel for Jehovah. It has no equivalent in Hebrew, yet it is the keynote of all Christian harmony. *Love* in its Christian sense was a *new creation*, and *agape* was chosen to represent it.

It has been recognized that the world had become politically *prepared* to receive this doctrine of universal humanity or Christian love; for many nations previously at enmity had at this time become fused together by conquest, and so went to form the vast Roman empire. They would all, therefore, not merely obey Roman law, but come to see the expediency if not the morality of respecting each other. Christian love, however, in the full sense of the term as we understand it now, was a 'new commandment' of Jesus; for the Roman saw nothing wrong in infanticide or in slavery. He did not understand submission, nor self-sacrifice for others in daily life, though he

would heroically die for Rome. As a matter of history, however, *agape* was not a product of the universal plan or of the vastness of the empire of Rome. Its sole source was the character of Jesus Christ. We cannot credit the political state which rendered the world ready to *receive* the seed, as *developing* it. A prepared field will not generate the corn.

We may, it is true, trace a sort of expansion in its application. Thus, as far as we can see, love or Christian Altruism, *i.e.*, regard and consideration for others, originally starts from the parental instinct to which it is mostly limited in animals; and in them it exists as a rule only until the offspring are independent. It may extend to the family circle or tribe, as among savages; and in them it stands for amicable relationships between them. It may embrace the whole nation, as with the Jews, Greeks, or ourselves; and then is superadded the sentiment of nationality or patriotism. Beyond that point, however, it was invariably and universally arrested. There was no known motivity for extending its influence in the world before Christ came. He, however, knows no limits whatever. The 'partition wall' was broken down between Jew and Gentile, for *all* men are now brothers in the Lord. It is obviously impossible to develop the idea further.

The Decalogue represents the extent of the

morality adopted before Christ came, as concerning 'Duty to one's neighbour.' He not only expanded or developed its commandments by substituting for 'Thou shalt not kill' Thou shalt not even be angry, but he converted or rather *inverted* the external rule into an internal principle, and thereby changed the negative morality of 'Thou shalt not,' into a positive form, 'Do good to them that hate you,' and 'love your enemies.'

Now the priest and the Levite of the parable had probably no idea that their neglect to do anything for the man who had fallen among thieves was reprehensible. It was not only the effect of the stage of moral thought represented by 'Thou shalt not' injure, and which implied that to abstain from injuring was all that was required by the outward rule; but it showed how degenerate even that had become, for they refused to carry out the injunction which they must have known—'Love your neighbour.' The parable, however, clearly represents the moral atmosphere of the priesthood at the time of Christ: for it was a picture of a condition of things which His hearers evidently did not think to be outrageous, as we should nowadays. On the other hand, the simple humanity of the Samaritan woke up at the sight of distress in a fellow man, even though he were Jew. He was already a 'Christian' in heart.

If we turn to Deuteronomy[1] we find it said:— 'If there be with thee a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt surely open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth.' We have here a sufficient proof that the Jew of the period would not hear either Moses or the Prophets; and that the prevailing tone of religious exclusiveness was a degenerate state utterly void of morality.

The respective conducts of the Levite and of the Samaritan bring to the front the fundamental difference between morality and religion. The one is for self-interest, the other is essentially unselfish. A man can abstain from immorality, and so live a moral life, because he thinks immorality does himself harm, here or hereafter. 'All these things have I kept from my youth upwards; what lack I yet?' That is the moral man, who may think his conduct perfection; but not so Jesus. Make a self-sacrifice for others, and you shall have treasure in heaven. That is the religious man; but the moral man goes away 'very sorrowful'; he has yet to learn that with negative morality only,

[1] Deut. xv. 7–9.

a man is still but an unprofitable servant, he has only done what he felt expedient to do. There is as yet no spontaneous action arising from a loving heart.

In a word, as we can see only too clearly from the picture drawn of the Pharisees, what had been considered morality had lapsed into egregious selfishness.

In contradistinction to this, no greater love exists than to lay down one's life for one's friends. But *unselfishness* cannot be developed out of *selfishness*. I think Mr. Herbert Spencer has overlooked this fact; for he says:[1] 'Conduct with which morality is not concerned, passes into conduct which is moral or immoral by small degrees and in countless ways.' But the very illustration he gives appears to me to prove the contrary, as follows (abridged): 'Shall I walk to the waterfall, or ramble along the sea-shore? Here the *ends* are ethically indifferent or non-moral. If I go to the waterfall, shall I take the longer or shorter route? Here the *means* are ethically indifferent. But suppose I have a friend who would like to go by the shore; or is not strong enough to go the longer way to the waterfall. Now, morally, *I must consider him*. Conversely, suppose he wish to go the longer route, but I have an appointment which

[1] *Data of Ethics*, p. 6.

I could not keep unless I went by the shorter. Now, morally, *he must consider me.*' There is no *passage* from selfishness or unselfishness here, but *morality is instantaneously introduced* the moment a selfish or unselfish motive is possible. If I give up what *I* would like to him, I am unselfish. If he insists on going the shorter route for my sake, *he* is unselfish. There is no 'transition.' The change from non-morality to morality simply depends upon the absence or presence of a particular factor, namely the *motive*, and this is *agape*.

With reference to the origin of altruism as Christ taught it, it is curious to observe how a great writer like Renan fails to see how he can be judged out of his own mouth. He says, 'In spite of all their defects—hard, egotistical—the Jews are nevertheless the authors of the finest movement of disinterested enthusiasm of which history speaks. . . . Jesus was the glory of the people of Israel, and they crucified Him.' Elsewhere, he says that Jesus had 'an exalted conception of the Divinity, which he did not owe to Judaism.' One may well ask how can love be developed out of egotism? or 'altruism' out of 'selfishness,' to which it is diametrically opposed? 'A silk purse was never made out of a sow's ear.'

It is hardly necessary to quote or refer to more of Christ's sayings. One need only contrast what He taught with what was 'said of old.' In all cases the 'letter' of the law was thought to be all-sufficient, but Christ substitutes 'the spirit,' *e.g.*, we must not simply forgive an erring brother seven times, and then stop; but *always*, as soon as repentance is shown. We must not only love our kind, but do good unto *all* men; and so on for all other things. Now, here again, 'the spirit that giveth life,' which underlies this conduct, cannot be developed out of 'the letter that killeth.' The latter was a *rule*, governing morality in its influences in olden time. The former is a *principle* of everlasting Christianity, and does not admit of any further advance. Even hate and revenge were regarded as right and noble emotions. Christ has pronounced them to be unmitigated sins. Indeed, in the old world, as the author of *Ecce Homo* well says, 'Conscience had taken the wrong side.' If so, how could the 'right side' be possibly developed out of it? Black cannot become white, or darkness light. Hate cannot develop into love, nor legalism into a gospel of perfect freedom. Much less could the hypocrisy of the Jewish Pharisees and the impurities of

pagan worship be transformed, by any evolutionary process whatever, into a worship in spirit and in truth.

Previous moral teachers attempted to draw up external rules of conduct. Not so Christ. He bases the Christian religion upon internal principles, which, when once engraven on the heart, carry their own rules with them. That this should be the case, he told his disciples they were not to think beforehand what they should say when brought before rulers, but that they would utter the right thing at the right moment, for out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Once more, then, active principles in the heart cannot be developed out of external rules to be obeyed; and it is to be observed that the reason why the same words may be nothing but an external rule in one case, and yet form, or be accepted as an internal principle in another, depends upon the motive power brought to bear upon it. In the one case there are the fear of punishment and the hope of reward; in the other, it is love; but perfect love casteth out fear, and cannot be developed from it, and never does a work for the sake of a reward.

Christianity has been considered the most advanced form of religion in the world; and it is noticeable that it is embraced in some form

or other by the most civilized nations, not necessarily the most numerous. Mere numbers do not prove anything. As long as men are merely contented with definite creeds, rules, codes or laws, or even devices whereby they are forced to sustain a certain moral character, and that this is secured only through fear of punishment or hope of reward, they are as yet 'under tutors, and are not as 'sons,' as St. Paul says; just as he takes Jerusalem to form the subject of an allegory as representing the servitude of his nation under the law in contrast with its sonship under the freedom of the gospel of Christ.

Now, it is important to observe that these two states do not represent in the spiritual world a natural growth or development but always *a sudden change*. Just as the moment a youth is twenty-one, he becomes free from parental law; and the instant the paper is signed and placed in the hand of the slave, he is free; so similarly, St. Paul urges that the moment Christ died on the Cross, the law became obsolete. The change brought about by the acceptance of this fact is called a new birth or regeneration; or again, a passing from death unto life, etc., but *never* a development.

Before Christ came and died, the Jewish nation was in the elementary condition of servitude or tutelage. Hence the Apostle correctly describes

the law as 'our tutor to bring us unto Christ.' There was an elaborate code, much added to by the 'traditions of the elders,' and it was the firm belief that Jehovah would send either one or other of His three forms of punishment on national apostasy, viz., the sword, the famine, or the pestilence. On the other hand, He would reward their obedience with an increase of their corn, wine and oil.

All other religions, with the solitary exception of Christianity, are more or less of this old type. For example, Mahommedans look for a glorious paradise, according to their view, as a reward for doing what they think to be right. The development of the Oriental mind is mostly arrested at the 'pupelage' stage.

Jesus Christ alone has shown how men can advance to a perfect manhood of moral and religious growth; but He has proved that it was not so much by a gradual process of development from pre-existing ideas, as by *an actual reversal of the understanding, metanoia*, with an accompanying regeneration and awakening of the conscience.

Unfortunately mankind has been slow to emancipate itself from this state of spiritual childhood. We all still cling too much to the letter, and not a few of us still believe in external rewards and punishments, only we have transferred them from this to a future world.

It seems to me, however, that they have only a metaphorical signification in the writings of the Apostles. A closer attention to their meaning will, I think, discover the mistake. Thus St. Paul speaks at one time of looking forward to his reward, but what was it? Simply that he might preach the gospel free of charge.[1] Again,[2] he hopes that he might 'gain Christ' and 'press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' By this he evidently means that his prize was to be Christ-like. His 'reward' was, therefore, simply and solely the ennoblement of his own personal character. So is it with us. Eternal life or the kingdom of heaven is already begun within us, and our reward begun here but to be completed hereafter is the 'making our calling and election sure.'

Christ, the Motive Power of Christianity.

There is hardly any need to enter into further illustrations of the statements hitherto made. Let us pass on to consider *wherein lay the powerful motivity which Christ has introduced;* for it was in consequence of the want of adequate motive powers that other previous moral teachers so often failed to be able to propagate their views. Christianity,

[1] *Cf.* 1 Cor. iii., verses 8, 14, with 1 Cor. ix., 17.
[2] Phil. iii., 7–16.

on the other hand, has shown its inherent power, or, as we may say, its 'potentiality' of striking root in every age and in well-nigh every nation, and even every heart.

It is a matter of no importance to the question if every moral maxim found in the Gospels (which I would dispute to be the case) had been uttered before either by the Prophets or by heathen philosophers. But we know as a matter of fact that neither Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, nor any other speaker or writer has been able to regenerate mankind. The philosophers, one and all, were profoundly impressed with the impotence of their systems to touch the heart of the great majority of mankind. Similarly with Judaism, we know as a matter of fact that pharisaism and the traditions of the elders were the ruling forces in Judæa; lamentable degradations they were too from what had noble qualities in former times; which, moreover, sank into lower depths still, after the death of Christ. On the other hand, the prophetical teaching had ceased to influence the mass of the nation.

The hopelessness of purely moral teaching having any power to regenerate mankind in general, could not be better expressed than by Aristotle's wail of despair, with which he concludes his ten books on Ethics. 'Now, if mere treatises were sufficient of themselves to make men good, justly "would

they have received many and great rewards," as Theognis says, 'and it would be our duty to provide ourselves with them. But the truth is, that they seem to have power to urge on and to excite young men of liberal minds, and to make a character that is generous and truly fond of the honourable, easily influenced by virtue; but that they have no power to persuade the multitude to what is virtuous and honourable.'[1]

The question before us is therefore, whence came Christ's motive power? Here we arrive at the most startling and unique fact of the gospel history of Jesus Christ.

One of the first things He does is to emphatically declare that God is a loving Father. He, therefore, bids men to look up to Him, as they can to a terrestrial father. The Greek philosophers obviously could not do that, and consequently never attempted to employ the love either of or for God as a motive power for moral conduct in man. The previous conception of Jehovah by the Jews had been more of the nature of a schoolmaster than of a father, and embraced severity rather than parental love.

An all-important consequence flowed from this new conception which Christ introduced. No Greek or Hebrew word really conveys the meaning of what a Christian understands by *sin*. It could

[1] *Ethics*, book x., chap. ix. §§ 1–5.

not be so, until this new relationship between man and his Father-God was entertained and thoroughly absorbed, so to say, into his moral constitution. The delinquent might feel that he had 'missed his aim,' as both the Greek and Hebrew words imply, but no pang of the conscience would necessarily accompany it. The higher moral attitude of the psalmist and prophet might approximate to our notion of sin; but it was not reached by the majority. The consciousness of 'sin,' like Christian love, if I may so express it, was a new creation.

Consequently we find that under Christianity the conscience became definitely recognized; and the familiar idea of 'knowing anything or nothing against oneself,' implied by the verb *suneidenai*,[1] became formulated in the noun *suneidesis*, which does not occur in profane authors; in which the conception of duty to God becomes the ruling element.

God was in Christ reconciling the World unto Himself.

To tell His contemporaries that the Being whose name, Yahveh, they dare not utter, was not really so severe a Judge as they had imagined, but was One more inclined to mercy and love

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 4.

than to punish; and that they need not even fear to call Him Abba, Father, would have had but little weight of itself, if He could not prove it. This proof is the most astounding fact the world has ever seen. 'Show us the Father' has been the uttered or suppressed cry of man from the foundation of the world. The reply came, 'He that hath seen *Me* hath seen the Father.' He would have His contemporaries make no mistake in the matter. Not only does He forgive sins, but claims for Himself the unpronouncible title, and they proceed to stone Him. He stands before the high priest as an arrested malefactor, and declares Himself to be the Son of God; the high priest rends his garments at the supposed blasphemy.

Nearly two thousand years have passed, and all Christendom, calmly reviewing those events have come to the conclusion that Christ was right and His opponents wrong. Why? Let us briefly examine His attitude at various times, and ascertain the grounds of His unparalleled self-assertion, and of this conviction of Christendom. That He should identify himself with Jehovah was an extremely hazardous step: yet His manner of so doing has no arrogance, for it is coupled with the most profound humility, but has the intensest sublimity about it. If He were mad, there was certainly the most inexplicable method in His

madness. A curiously seeming incongruity too, for as long as He was not thwarted in His teaching He invariably called Himself 'The Son of Man'; yet when He saw His opponents gradually becoming more and more embittered against Him, then did His voice rise in intensity, and He did not hesitate to declare Himself one with 'I AM,' an utterance which He well knew would be fatal. And so it was; for the critical moment came, and they would fain have thrown Him over the precipice in their fury. In fact, a time soon followed when they crucified Him.

If we contrast Him with previous teachers of morality we at once observe a marked difference. Whatever may be meant by 'inspiration' as applicable to the Prophets, the word at least signifies that they considered themselves the *recipients* of divine truths. It is never so with Christ. He invariably speaks from a source of infallible truth arising from His inner consciousness, 'Verily, verily, *I* say unto you.' Hence He is infallible in His judgments; and what is more, they are true for all time; *e.g.*, the crowd press Him to pass sentence on a sinner. As was always the case He refused to be a temporary judge of crime; but by His reply *He has judged all mankind till doomsday.*

Again, note the absolute calmness of His mind under all the most trying circumstances, whether

He be met by physical dangers, by ridicule, unbelief or blasphemy, the repose of His mind is perfect, and he tells us why, 'I am not alone, for the Father is with Me.' Such is not the manner of men.

Christ stands before us, a character of perfect holiness; but the attitude of perfect holiness towards moral evil embraces legal sternness. It was this which engendered the awe and fear of Jehovah, while the conception of benevolence or love was far subordinate to, if not totally absent from, the Jewish mind.

Christ, however, has shown how these two attributes are compatible in God. No sterner denunciations ever fell from man's lips than those of the 'Gentle Jesus,' upon hypocrites and the selfish. But no Jew before Him ever went about doing good, and associated by preference with the publicans and sinners. *The Missionary Spirit was a Creation of Christ, and no Development from Judaism.*

Such, and much more, was Jesus Christ as the Gospels present Him to us. Friends and foes agree in regarding Him as far transcending not only the average moral man but the very highest among Christians the world has ever seen. His indescribable humility conjoined to His astounding pretensions is a combination of qualities which the world never saw before or since. Eighteen centuries refuse to recognize the Carpenter as a

madman, simply on the natural principle that a tree is known by its fruit. There is no alternative except that He was what He claimed to be; not a 'development' or 'product' of His age, but a *new creation* in the world—'The Only Begotten Son of God.'

Take such expressions as, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,' 'I and My Father are One,' 'He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father,' 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,' 'Before Abraham was I AM'; and those exquisitely beautiful utterances commencing:—'Come unto Me, all ye that labour,' etc., 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' etc., 'Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often,' etc. Place any one of these in the mouth of any of the very highest moral teachers the world has ever seen—Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, David, St. John, Paul, or any 'divine' of later centuries, and then consider what we should have thought of him if he had so spoken of himself. How is it, if He were 'evolved,' that during the preceding four hundred years the history of Judaism furnishes us with no 'moral links' between Malachi and Christ? For there is no record of any one having ever pronounced any sayings at all approximating such utterances as these, and the reader will recall many others like them. Jesus is thus an 'isolated type.' If, however, we find such types among animals and plants—and

they are numerous—we know at once, that they are 'survivals' of a lost ancestry, Christ, however, was not the last of a series, but the first of a new 'race'—the Christian Church. In this respect, therefore, he is markedly distinct from analogous phenomena in the physical world.

The prophets came nearest to God, but they knew they were but emissaries, and always commenced with the words, 'Thus saith the Lord.' They were sometimes mistaken, as in their conception of the Messiah; modern preachers are only too often contradictory; never so Christ. No man other than Jesus has ever possessed that inner consciousness of infallible truth which was always present to Him. It is on these grounds, namely, the absolutely perfect character which He exhibited, the absolutely infallible source of truth within Him, the perfect consistency in His words and conduct, the profoundest humility and self-sacrifice even unto death, which the world has ever witnessed, coupled with the supremest sublimity of soul and purity of life—a combination of a superhuman greatness and condescension which no man can boast of—that the Christian Church has placed him on the highest pedestal of honour and affection, has accepted His utterances as true, and in a word that He and His Father *are* One.

Having revealed to His contemporaries the true

character of God as a loving Father, and having exhibited that same character in its absolute perfection in His own person, He thus placed before the world the great motive power wherewith He would regenerate mankind: *That Power is Himself.*

Faith, the Basis of Christian Belief.

Now, just as the development of a plant or animal is dependent upon the two factors, viz. the influence of the environment and the responsive power of protoplasm within; similarly is it in the making of a Christian, Jesus Christ's personal character on the one hand, and a responsive power in a man's heart and intellect on the other. This latter is called in scriptural language, 'Faith.' Let us observe that this process was absolutely new to the moral sphere on earth. Like the Greek words for 'sin,' 'repentance,' 'conscience,' 'philanthropy,' and 'love,' that for 'belief' has in the Christian sense a new meaning imparted to it—that of 'faith.' It is a spontaneous loyalty to truth and goodness, regenerating the conduct; and truth and goodness are simply synonyms for Jesus Christ, who was 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

The word 'repentance' explains what takes place, for the Greek word signifies 'a change of mind,' or, as I call it, 'a reversal of the under-

standing and conscience.' It involves a reconciliation from an alien condition of the heart to God, in a word an 'At-one-ment'[1] is effected.

The nrst step is not a *development*, but a *conversion*, though the growth in grace *afterwards*, and the 'making the calling and election sure,' involves a long process of development of the character.

Mr. Leslie Stephen says, that it is upon 'the facts of consciousness' that morality really depends, and adds, that 'of all the illusions patronised by philosophers there is none more baseless than the notion that morality is dependent upon speculative opinion'; and 'no device has hitherto succeeded in making bad men good.'

It is not very obvious what he would include under 'facts of consciousness,' but if they may embrace 'conscience' and the awakening of a regenerated conscience as a result of faith; then, that was Christ's method.

Speculative opinion or head-belief may make

[1] In my work, *Christian Beliefs Reconsidered in the Light of Modern Thought*' (F. Norgate), I have endeavoured to point out how the word 'atonement conveys now a totally different and erroneous meaning from that which it originally had, namely, At-one-ment;' and that at-one-ment or reconciliation (not vicarious offering) is the meaning of the Greek *Katalasse*. The transition in meaning is noticeable in the various translations of the Bible from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the time of the Authorised Version. About 1560 appears to be the period of change of meaning.

men keep the law through fear, but cannot make them 'love it'; consequently, no motive such as the fear of punishment or 'hell,' nor, indeed, the hope of a tangible reward here, or hereafter, can do more. All such are only needful for a state of moral pupelage; not for that of a Christian, 'who has become a man.'

Again, he says, 'People quietly take for granted that a creed is somehow the efficient cause of all conduct, which it is supposed to sanction; *e.g.*, all Christians hate war, because their religion orders them to turn the second cheek. But when we infer that Mahommedanism or Christianity is the ultimate cause of temperance or goodwill to mankind, we are either illogical or tacitly assuming that the origin of creeds is supernatural.'

As far as Christianity is concerned the above does not accurately represent the truth of the matter. As long as anyone is not immoral solely through the belief that he will be punished or rewarded, as the case may be; so far, his belief or creed *is* an efficient cause of his conduct. This, however, as I have stated, and would repeat, is but the preliminary or childhood stage of man's moral development. It applies to Judaism of old, and to Mahommedanism now; but it does not account for Christian purity and love. Christ differs from

all other teachers in many ways, and in this one in particular, that he gave no *rules*, but substituted *principles*, and superadded a motive power by which they can be engraven on the heart.

There is exactly the same difference between an artificially framed law and a 'natural law.' The one represents *what ought to be;* the other simply states *what invariably is;* and if men were always what they ought to be, then their conduct would be as much a natural law as gravity, *i.e.*, simply an expression for an observed order of facts. Now Jesus Christ has discovered to us how we can pass from one to the other. I do not pretend to say that men can be absolutely and invariably good. He alone was that. Conduct is so complicated and man is so weak, that it is probably impossible for him to attain absolute perfection; but many a Christian does become perfect in some one or more lines, if not in every phase of his character. 'Be ye *perfect* as your Heavenly Father is perfect.' That is the expression of natural law in the moral sphere. 'He who is born of God *cannot* sin'; St. John has here grasped the same truth which is expressed in various ways in Scripture. It is the condition of those who are 'not under law' but 'under grace.' The 'natural man' is one to whom the Apostle often alludes. It is he who obeys his natural pro-

pensities, and places no efficient check to his selfish instincts. The 'spiritual man' who is regenerate, may, at first, find it hard to arrest those instincts by his volitional efforts, but soon discovers that the higher natural laws of purity and love will reign supreme; and *then* his instincts turn all the other way, and unselfishness becomes inherent in his character.

There is no *gradual passage* from one to the other. The Apostle always contrasts strongly what is 'natural' with what he calls 'spiritual.' He never gives us to understand how the one can *grow out of* or be *developed from* the other. Hence is the fact that the natural man cannot understand or appreciate the spiritual man, and it is exemplified every day of our lives. Now, it is not a 'belief' or 'creed' which can work the change from one to the other. Mere head knowledge, like the reason of the Greek philosophers, much less any 'device,' can ever make men spiritually good. It is solely a living faith which Jesus Christ first introduced into the world, which is the only and really potent and efficient cause.

The same fountain *cannot* put forth both bitter and sweet waters. As long as men believed that hatred, hereditary and feudal or not, revenge, *lex talionis*, and war were *right*, they pursued them with all their energies, and the heroic virtues were deified. Christ *reversed* this uni-

versal creed.[1] He placed mankind on a different platform altogether; and Christians now abhor hatred, anger, revenge and the like, war included, not merely because Christ *said* that they were wrong, but because they are under the new natural law of love, which was undiscovered before Christ brought it to light. The hatred of war, therefore, is now a part of the true Christian nature. It is, so to say, an instinct inherent in his heart, and not a belief on authority at all.

Nor does 'the Christian religion order them to turn the second cheek' in the sense Mr. Stephen seems to imply. This injunction was given to his first disciples by Jesus Christ as an illustration or type of what their conduct should be when in contact with the heathen world. Submission was, so to say, his watch-word; and history has proved how successful it has been. It was only displayed where open hostility was exhibited, and when all attempts of reasoning and persuasion would have been, or were as pearls thrown before swine. This, however, is not the attitude which Christ enjoins all Christians to sustain towards another erring Christian; which is this: 'If *thy brother* sin, rebuke him; and if *he repent*, forgive him.'[2]

[1] Contrast the proverb of the Jews, 'The best among the Gentiles kill,' with Christ's injunction, 'Love your enemies.'

[2] Luke xvii. 3.

Love is the fundamental principle of Christianity, 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.' As the author of *Ecce Homo* calls it, 'natural kindliness' was the little spark of humanitarian feeling which occasionally flickered in the profound darkness of the ancient moral world. This, Jesus fanned into a flame of 'enthusiasm for humanity,' and called it *agape* or brotherly love. This natural law had been in abeyance until then. The discovery of it, and the introduction of the means, *i.e.*, Faith, by which it was made effective, were practically new creations in the world.

The Christianity of Anti-Christians.

Now, anti-Christians may reply by asking how is it, then, that we are not immoral men? We, too, are as ready and willing as you are to do a kindly act whenever the opportunity comes before us. We, too, hate war, and as far as our daily conduct goes, there is practically no difference between, at least, many of us and you. Some of us, indeed, may be better men than some of you Christians. How do you account for it?

The answer is simple enough. You are not only the product of your environment, but you cannot, even if you wished to, eliminate hereditary influences. You *are* 'christianised,' though you may refuse to be called Christians. You are in some respects Christ-like, *in spite of your unbelief;*

just as many who profess to be Christians imitate their Master, irrespective of their creeds.

The Christ-like character is accepted by all men of Christian countries as estimable. Even the Christ of Renan is practically an impossible man. We are all composed of the two factors commonly represented by 'head' and 'heart.' The head may have its own ideas, its own creed; but the heart has its own instincts. Mr. Bradlaugh, whose head could not bring him to accept the evidences of the existence of a living personal God, which are usually considered conclusive, nevertheless, interested himself in the question of doing good and justice, *i.e.*, he showed a feeling which, had it had a right origin and motive, would have been a true Christian love towards the natives of India. He might have called himself a secularist or atheist, but he borrowed from the teaching of Christ—even if unconsciously—in this matter in spite of his disbelief of Christianity. Similarly, Jews residing among us are as much 'Christian' in their general conduct as members of the community as we ourselves are. They cannot escape from Christ's living influence.

Had Christ never lived upon earth, this longing to do good to distant foreigners, peoples in distress, whatever may be their race or creed, which is characteristic of Englishmen, whether atheists or not, Jews or otherwise, might never have arisen;

but as it is, they cannot avoid being influenced by the leaven of Christianity, which is imbibed, as it were, with the air they breathe.

If, therefore, writers on ethics, instead of solely using the words 'belief,' 'creed,' 'morality,' and 'Christianity,' would substitute for them 'faith,' 'heart,' 'religion' and 'Christ,' the opposition so often felt would tend to disappear. We want to understand one another, for we do not differ at all in reality, *i.e.*, in accepting Christ as our *ideal*. We only differ in our *ideas* about Him.

Conclusion.

I would again refer the reader to the words of Mr. Leslie Stephen quoted at the commencement. He will now see that they exactly express what Jesus Christ has done. The fact, I repeat, that He uttered many moral truths which had been discovered before, is beside the point. This is due to the fact that Christ represents the highest form of humanity; and that is really part of human nature. Consequently, it is not to be wondered at that environmental conditions should from time to time bring to the front occasional humanitarian ideas. No one, however, who knows anything at all of the early history of the world up to the first century of our epoch; or of that of the Jewish nation in particular, can hesitate for a

moment in saying that Christ is not profoundly distant from all pre-existent moralists. If, then, what I have written be true, it will be seen that in many points He is not merely an advance, or a 'development,' or a 'differentiation' from previous moral thought, but was actually a *reversal*. Mr. Stephen assumes that we are all agreed that there is no antagonism. This, however, is the very point I have contested. He adds that evolution *must* test Christianity. Science, however, I repeat, rejects all *à priori* assumptions however plausible, and does not know the word 'must.' The only philosophical way is to examine the data carefully, and see what conclusions they furnish. It is unquestioned that our only data of importance are the writings of the New Testament for the character of Christ. The theory that it is a myth has completely broken down.[1] That Jesus Christ as there represented to us was a living person is the only rational interpretation. This being the case, it is not difficult to contrast Him with the moral ideas of the country in which he was brought up; moreover, I repeat, Christ *is* Christianity. There has been no advance or development from Him since, only plenty of degenerations. The kingdom of heaven passes in each individual from the state of servitude to sonship, from

[1] I would refer the reader especially to *The Jesus of the Evangelists*, by Rev. C. A. Row, Prebendary of St. Paul's.

duty to love, as our bodily and mental powers develop. The kingdom of heaven may spread through a country, and in time all over the world; but it is in all cases simply by becoming more and more closely approximate to the character of our Lord. Beyond this it cannot go, and in all probability never will even attain 'to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' Whether rightly or wrongly, the consensus of opinion of Christendom has uniformly refused to regard the ideal Christian character as represented in Jesus Christ as a development. On the contrary, it is always designated as a regeneration,[1] and a new birth is required for every individual; and Jesus Christ Himself is described as the only-begotten Son of God. The individual can by no means acquire perfection in any 'sudden conversion.' He himself must truly enough grow in grace, adding virtue to virtue, and so on, but this is not the question under debate, which is, 'Whence came Christ?' Was *He* Himself a 'development' or 'product' of His environment, or a 'new creation'?

From all that has been said above, and much more might have been added in illustration, it will be seen that Christ is absolutely unique in the

[1] I must refer the reader to a discussion as to the strict applicability of this word, first, to the Christian community, secondly, to the individual, in my work, *Christian Beliefs Reconsidered in the Light of Modern Thought*, chaps. viii. and ix. (F. Norgate.)

motivities which He has introduced, and constitutes what Mr. Leslie Stephen recognizes as 'obviously a new factor in history.'

The reader can now draw his own conclusions from the evidence adduced, whether the environment of Jesus Christ, looked at from any point of view, fails completely or not, to afford sufficient or even any evidence at all of our Lord having been a natural product of His age.

'Could any good thing come out of Nazareth?'

The only answer that seems to satisfy this question is 'Yes: but it was the Son of God.'

He alone has 'introduced into the world a *New Spirit*, by which pure Christianity still presents, after eighteen centuries, the character of a universal and eternal religion. The religion of Jesus is, in truth, the final religion. The right of all men to participate in the kingdom of God has been proclaimed by Jesus. Thanks to Jesus, the prerogatives of conscience. . . . have succeeded in establishing a *new Power*, namely, the '*Spiritual power*. . . . Christianity [has been] stamped with an *original* character, which nothing can ever efface.'[1]

Christ was a new creation, and no product of evolution.

[1] Renan, *Life of Jesus*, pp. 185–6.

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